BARBARA STONE MEMORIAL

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It used to be the custom in England to ring the church bell when a member of the Parish died. A man might send his servant or son to learn who had died — and it was this custom John Donne had in mind when he wrote words we have come to love.

> “No man is an island entire of itself — each is part of the continent, a piece of the main.
>
> If a clod be washed away into the sea Europe is the less.

> So never send to know for whom the bell tolls.
>
> It tolls for thee.

One of us had died and each of us is the less.

We are here today to remember and give God thanks for the miracle and gift of human life and for the life of Barbara Lafrentz Stone — to recall what we loved about her and how our lives were enriched and made better because she lived.

We are here to put her life and death in the context of her faith and trust in the God who creates all life and loves each of us uniquely and personally — and from whose love nothing can separate us.

And we are here to stand close to her husband and daughter and son as they cope with what has happened and grieve.

For them, the death of their wife and mother comes after five years of unique challenges — for her as she struggled with the tragic results of one of those random accidents that occasionally, without rhyme or reason, interrupt our otherwise ordinary and happy lives.

And unique challenges for them as they struggled to keep the life-affirming structures of family and love alive.

We are here to stand close together with them and with all who loved and cared for Barbara.

God gave her the gift of her life and Barbara used it happily, lived it fully.

She was, her family and friends remembered for me:

- A strong woman
- Passionate
- She loved deeply without reservation
- A woman who when her daughter arrived, brought to an end her profession — and started a new one — parenthood — mothering.
- And at that, Paula said she was nothing short of phenomenal.
- She fought hard for Paula and Rob.
- Led them by example — pushed them hard
- Wanted them to learn to rejoice in the gift of their lives as she rejoiced in hers.

- Pushed them to love sports and be as competitive as she was as a tennis player.
- Supported and encouraged them.

And as I thought about her, about what happened five years ago and her dying much too soon — it occurred to me that to be a parent — of your own children — or in some way of the next generation — to be what the psychologists sometimes call “generative” — that is, one who gives and generate life in and for those who come after.

Is about the highest and best to which any of us can aspire.

So, yes, we celebrate her life and give God thanks for her life.

Barbara was a Christian.

A member of the congregation which she joined in 1971 and in which her children were baptized.

And among the many ways to define what a Christian is — is one who sees in Jesus Christ the answer to life's ultimate question about:

- Who we are?
- And why we are here?
- And what our lives mean?
- And where we are headed?

When this congregation of Christians comes to the communion table — as the bread and wine are served it is our custom to recite together the 23rd Psalm.

"The Lord is my shepherd

That lovely Psalm which we know by heart contains the most radical of proposals — namely:

- We are not alone
- There is one who created us
- Intends us
- Walks with us
- Shares our life
- And is there at the end of the day to welcome us home.

We don’t know what prompted the writer

- Perhaps a tragedy/loss
- He stood where we stand
- And wrote beautiful words
- “Even though I walk…”

That was the hope.

And then in Bethlehem a child born who grew to manhood and lived out the hope — by showing how human life is to be lived.

And in his dying showed that God intends human life to be lived for others in service and love.

And in the mystery of his resurrection showed that God's love conquers everything that diminishes, hurts, threatens us — even death.

So — a few years later — his follower Paul would ask …..

> "Who can separate us from the love of Christ —

Sickness, persecution — sword — random accidents that interrupt and disrupt.

No — “nothing can separate us from the love of God in …..”

Good News

God loved Barbara Lafrentz Stone.